

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of Study

English is widely recognized as an international language that plays an important role in education, science, technology, and global communication. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and is considered an essential subject in schools. One of the main goals of English language teaching is to help students communicate effectively. To achieve this goal, learners need not only sufficient grammatical and lexical knowledge but also the ability to understand and produce English appropriately in spoken communication.

The context of English learning in Indonesia is different from learning English in countries where English is used as a first or second language. In an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, learners generally have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom. According to Brown (2000), learners in EFL settings are often isolated from natural language input, and their success in learning English depends largely on formal instruction, motivation, and support from the learning environment. This condition shows that the classroom becomes one of the main places where students receive English input. Therefore, the quality of English provided by teachers is important because teachers may become one of the major sources of language exposure for students.

One important aspect of English input is pronunciation. Pronunciation plays an essential role in spoken communication because it directly affects

intelligibility. Kelly (2000) argues that pronunciation contributes significantly to intelligibility, meaning that listeners are more likely to understand messages when speech is produced clearly and accurately. In contrast, pronunciation difficulties may lead to misunderstanding even when the speaker uses appropriate grammar and vocabulary. Therefore, pronunciation should receive adequate attention in English language teaching and learning.

The importance of pronunciation becomes even more evident in classroom settings, particularly in EFL contexts where students have limited exposure to natural English input. In this situation, English teachers play an important role as providers of language input and pronunciation models for their students. During the learning process, students are constantly exposed to the language used by their teachers through explanations, instructions, classroom discussions, and other teaching activities. Harmer (2007) emphasizes that teachers play an important role in providing language input that supports students' language development. Consequently, the pronunciation demonstrated by teachers may influence how students perceive, learn, and produce English sounds. For this reason, teachers are expected to provide clear and intelligible pronunciation models that can support effective language learning.

However, English pronunciation remains one of the challenging aspects of language learning and teaching, especially for speakers whose first language has a different sound system from English. This challenge may occur because speakers are already familiar with the phonological patterns of their first

language before learning English. According to Brown (2000), language learners may transfer linguistic features from their native language when using a second or foreign language. When this transfer negatively affects the production of the target language, it is commonly referred to as first language interference or negative transfer. As a result, speakers may unconsciously pronounce English words according to the sound patterns that are already familiar to them from their first language.

Among the various aspects of English pronunciation, vowels and diphthongs are important features to be examined because they contribute to distinguishing meaning and maintaining intelligibility in spoken communication. English has a relatively rich vowel system that differs considerably from many local languages in Indonesia. Some English vowel sounds and diphthongs may not exist in the phonological system of the speakers' first language. Consequently, speakers may experience difficulties when producing unfamiliar English sounds. In such situations, unfamiliar sounds may be replaced, simplified, or modified according to the phonological patterns of the speakers' native language.

This issue is relevant to the context of English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Solok. The teachers involved in this study are speakers of Minangkabau who have used Minangkabau as their first language and continue to use it in their daily communication. The Minangkabau language has its own phonological system, which differs from the English phonological system. These differences may influence the way Minangkabau speakers produce English sounds,

particularly vowels and diphthongs. Since the phonological patterns of the first language are already familiar and deeply established, teachers may unconsciously apply similar patterns when speaking English.

Based on preliminary observations conducted by the researcher, several English words containing vowels and diphthongs were pronounced differently from standard English pronunciation during classroom interaction. These pronunciation differences appeared in teachers' explanations, instructions, and communication with students. The observed patterns indicate the possibility of phonological interference from Minangkabau in the production of English vowels and diphthongs.

This phenomenon deserves attention because, in an EFL context, students may depend greatly on formal instruction and the language input available in their learning environment. As explained by Brown (2000), formal instruction and the learning environment play an important role in supporting EFL learners because they may have limited access to natural English input outside the classroom. Therefore, teachers' pronunciation becomes an important part of the language input received by students. If certain pronunciation patterns are influenced by the teachers' first language, these patterns may also become part of the English input that students repeatedly hear during the learning process. For this reason, understanding teachers' pronunciation difficulties and the possible influence of their first language is important for improving pronunciation awareness and English language teaching practices.

Although previous studies have discussed first language interference in English learning, many of them focus on students or examine English pronunciation in a broader sense. Some previous studies have investigated the influence of first language phonology on English pronunciation, particularly among learners. However, research specifically investigating the influence of Minangkabau phonology on the pronunciation of English vowels and diphthongs among English teachers remains limited. This creates a need for further investigation, particularly in the context of EFL teachers who function as important sources of English input for students.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the phonological interference of the Minangkabau language on the pronunciation of English vowels and diphthongs produced by English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Solok. By identifying the forms of interference that occur in teachers' pronunciation, this study is expected to provide a better understanding of the relationship between first language phonology and English pronunciation. Furthermore, the findings are expected to contribute to greater teacher awareness of pronunciation and support the development of more appropriate pronunciation teaching practices for students with a Minangkabau linguistic background.

B. Identification of Research

Based on the background above, several problems can be identified:

1. Pronunciation is an essential component of English Language Teaching because teachers serve as pronunciation models for students.
2. English vowels and diphthongs are important pronunciation features that

contribute to intelligibility in spoken communication.

3. Differences between the sound system of English and the sound system of Minangkabau may create difficulties in producing English vowels and diphthongs accurately.
4. English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Solok use Minangkabau as their first language and continue to use it in daily communication.
5. First language interference may occur when English teachers produce English vowel and diphthong sounds.
6. Several English vowels and diphthongs produced by English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Solok indicate the occurrence of first language interference.
7. The forms of first language interference found in the pronunciation of English vowels and diphthongs produced by English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Solok have not yet been clearly identified and analyzed.

C. Focus of Research

This study focuses on the phonological interference of Minangkabau language on the pronunciation of English vowels and diphthongs produced by English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Solok. The study aims to identify and analyze the types of phonological interference found in the production of English vowels and diphthongs. This research is conducted within the context of English Language Teaching (ELT), considering the important role of teachers as pronunciation models for students in the learning process. Therefore, the study seeks to provide a better understanding of how Minangkabau language

influences teachers' pronunciation of English vowels and diphthongs in classroom-related communication.

D. Formulation of Research

The formulation of this research, Specifically:

1. What kind Minangkabau vowels and diphthong interfere teachers' English pronunciation?
2. How does first language (Minangkabau) interfere English teacher's pronunciation of vowels and diphthongs?
3. How should teachers teach English pronunciation and speaking for students with minangkabau background ?

E. Purpose of Study

The purposes of this research are as follows:

1. To identify the interference of Minangkabau language on teachers' English pronunciation, especially vowels and diphthongs.
2. To analyze how this interference affects pronunciation teaching in the classroom.
3. To examine its potential impact on students' pronunciation learning.

F. Significance of Study

This research is expected to give both theoretical and practical contributions:

1. For Teachers

This study can help teachers become more aware of their pronunciation and improve their teaching strategies, especially in teaching vowels and diphthongs.

2. For Students

This research can help students receive better pronunciation input, which may improve their speaking ability and pronunciation accuracy.

3. For Researchers

This study can be used as a reference for further research related to pronunciation, interference, and English language teaching.

4. For English Language Teaching

This research contributes to improving the quality of pronunciation teaching by emphasizing the importance of minimizing first language interference in classroom learning.

G. Definition of Key Term

1. Phonological Interference

Phonological interference refers to the influence of a speaker's first language sound system on the pronunciation of a second language, resulting in deviations from the target language pronunciation.

2. Minangkabau Phonology

Minangkabau phonology refers to the sound system of the Minangkabau language, including its phonemes, vowels, consonants, and phonological patterns.

3. English Pronunciation

English pronunciation is the production of English speech sounds, particularly vowels and diphthongs, in accordance with the phonological system of English.

